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GHOST RIDER



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DIRECT EDITION

GHOST RIDER

MOTORCYCLE STUNTMAN JOHNNY BLAZE HAS ALWAYS HAD HIS HEART IN THE RIGHT PLACE... AND MADE ALL THE WRONG DECISIONS.

NOW HE'S GONE AND DONE IT AGAIN.

WHILE TRAPPED IN HELL, JOHNNY MADE A BARGAIN TO ESCAPE AND INADVERTENTLY FREED LUCIFER IN THE PROCESS. THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS' BODY BROKE APART ON THE WAY TO THE PHYSICAL WORLD AND SCATTERED INTO 666 PIECES, EACH OF WHICH POSSESSED A RECENTLY DECEASED MAN, WOMAN, OR CHILD. NOW, THOSE CORPSES HAVE REANIMATED UNDER LUCIFER'S CONTROL AND ARE WREAKING HAVOC UPON THE EARTH.

TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE, FOR EACH REANIMATED CORPSE THAT GHOST RIDER DEFEATS, EVERY OTHER WILL INCREASE IN STRENGTH AND POWERS. WHEN ONLY ONE REMAINS, IT WILL BE A BEING OF SUCH IMMENSE POWER THAT NONE MAY BE ABLE TO STAND IN ITS WAY!

THIS WHOLE MESS STARTED THE DAY JOHNNY BLAZE DIED.

ON THAT FATEFUL DAY, JOHNNY WAS ARRESTED IN LYNCHBURG, TENNESSEE FOR LOITERING. THE CROOKED POLICE DEPARTMENT PLOTTED TO PIN A LOCAL MAN'S MURDER ON THE INNOCENT BLAZE OR HIS FELLOW PRISONMATE, CLAY, BUT CLAY HAD A HIDDEN WEAPON—A CRACKERJACK LAWYER BY THE NAME OF BEDELSTRAUM WHO PROMISED TO DEFEND BOTH CLAY AND JOHNNY FROM THE COPS.

UNFORTUNATELY FOR JOHNNY, ALL WAS NOT AS IT SEEMED...





HELL TO PAY

PART TWO

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WAY
WRITER

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CORBEN
ARTIST

JOSE
VILLARRUBIA
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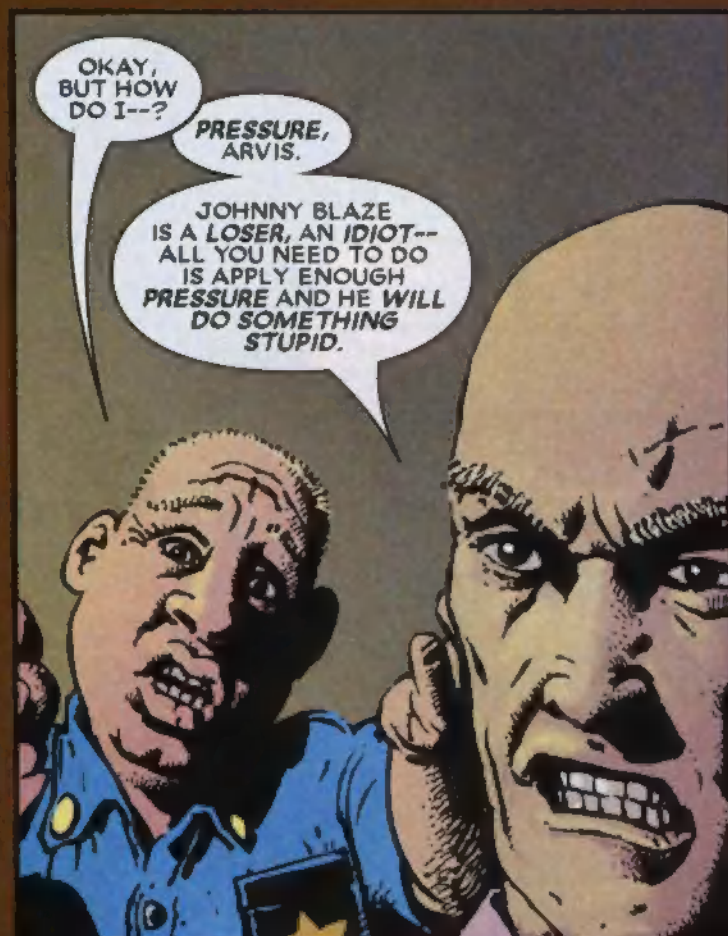
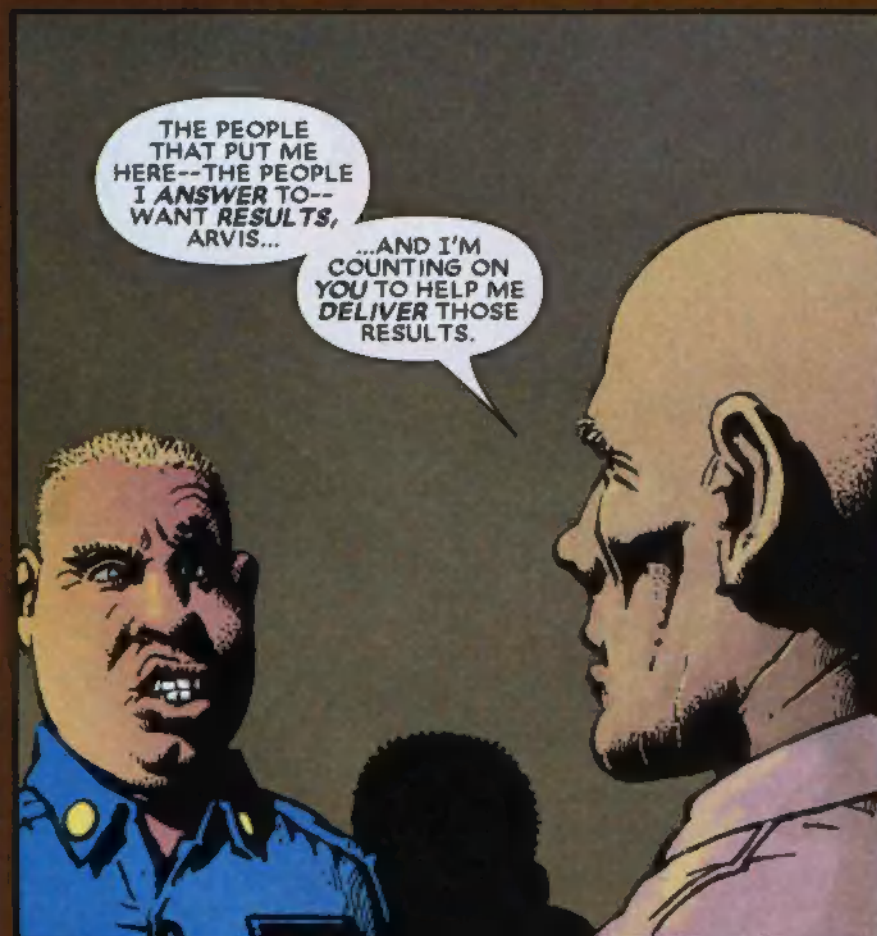
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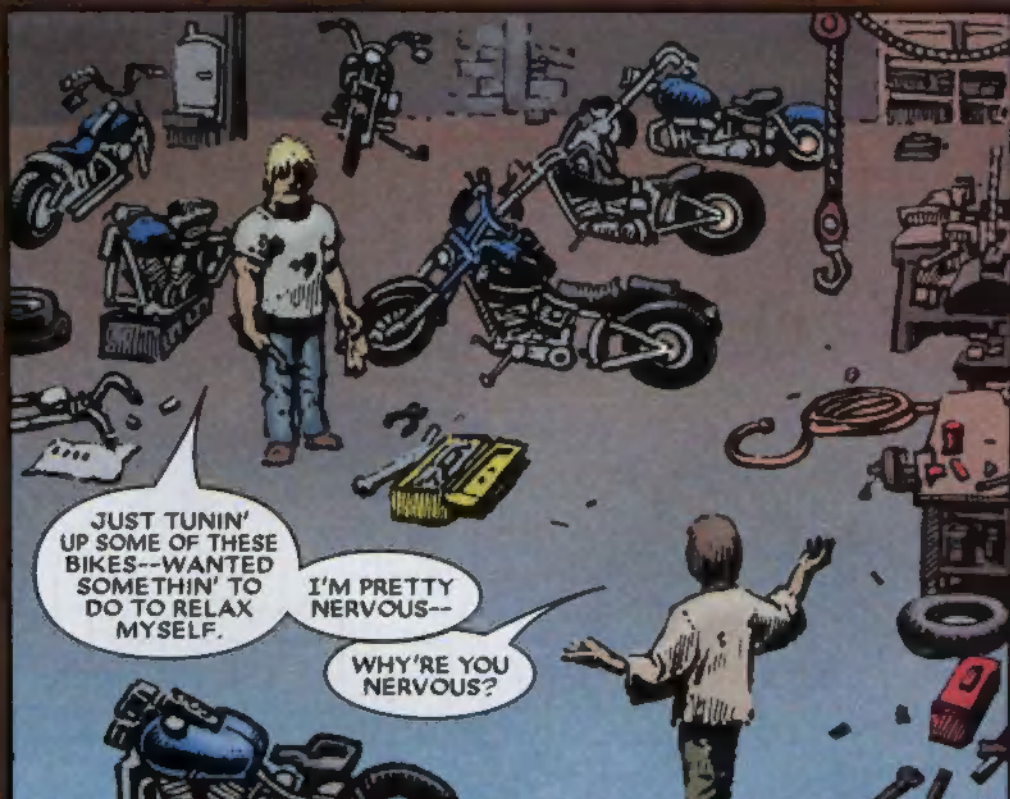
DAN
BUCKLEY
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UH... JOHNNY?

WHAT THE HELL'RE YOU DOIN', MAN?



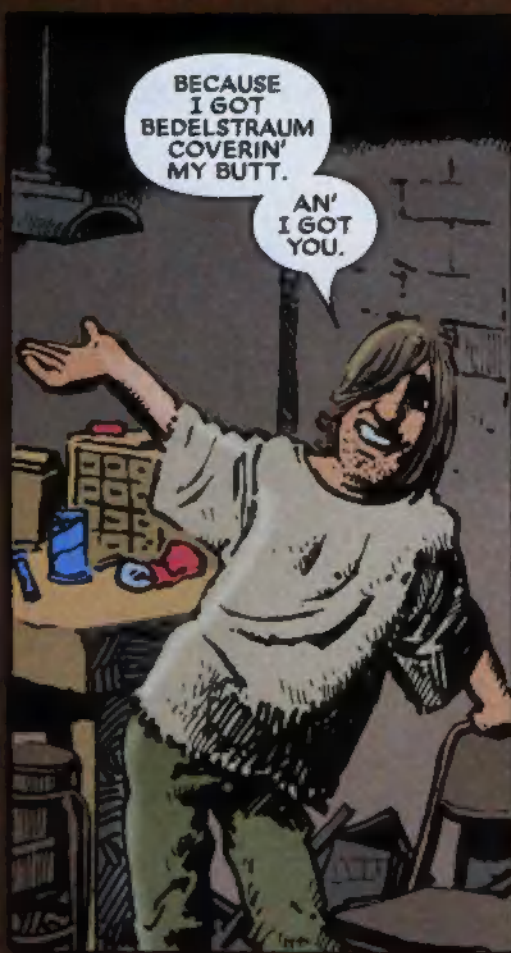
JUST TUNIN' UP SOME OF THESE BIKES--WANTED SOMETHIN' TO DO TO RELAX MYSELF.

I'M PRETTY NERVOUS--

WHY'RE YOU NERVOUS?



UH... WHY AREN'T YOU?



BECAUSE I GOT BEDELSTRAUM COVERIN' MY BUTT.

AN' I GOT YOU.



I DUNNO, CLAY...

THAT GUY, BEDELSTRAUM... SOMETHIN' ABOUT HIM THAT I DON'T QUITE TRUST, Y'KNOW?



YEAH, WELL...

HE IS A LAWYER...

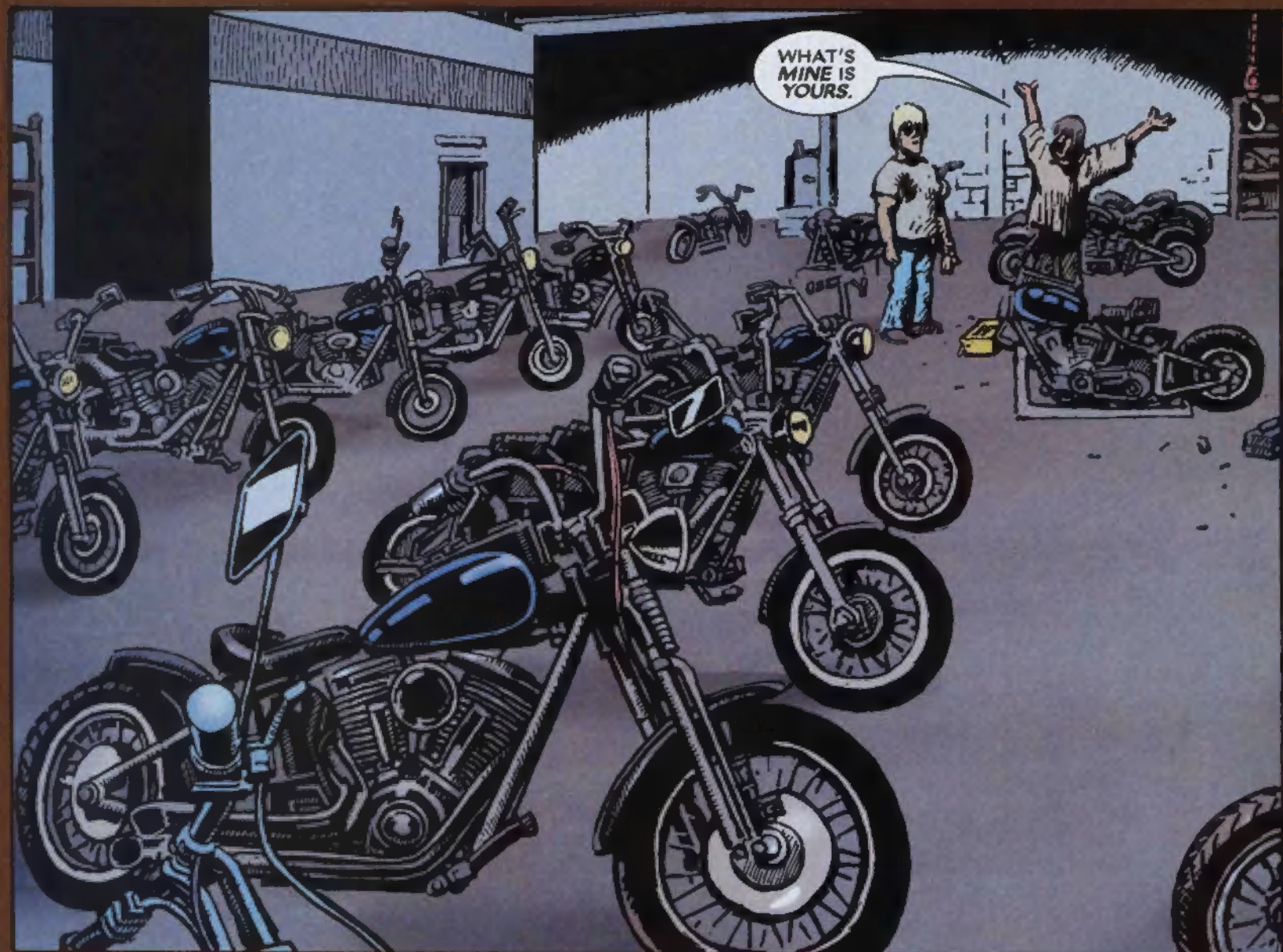


LET'S RIDE.

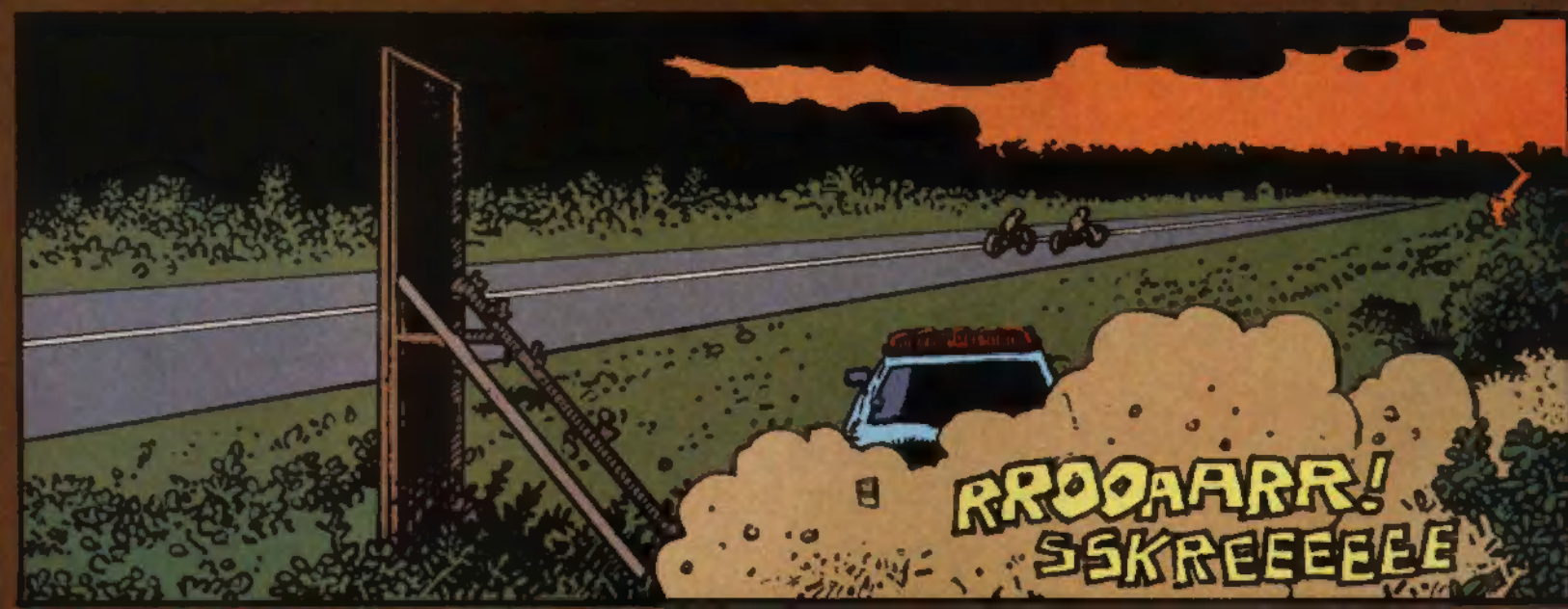


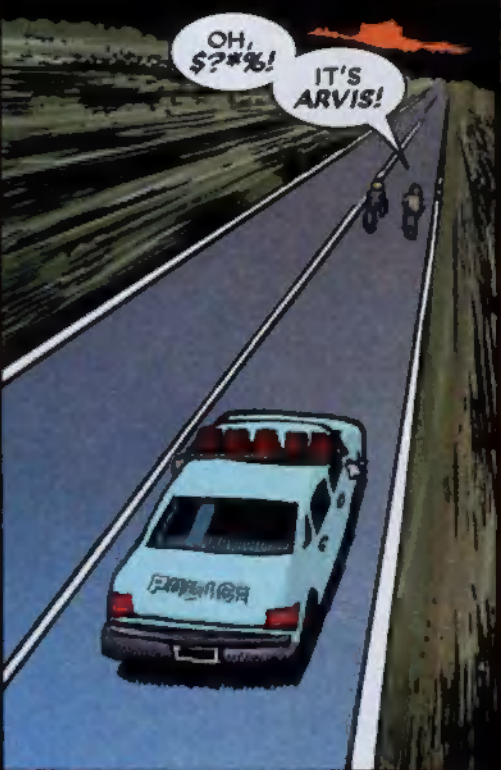
DON'T HAVE ANY WHEELS, MAN--MY BIKE'S BACK AT THE IMPOUND LOT.

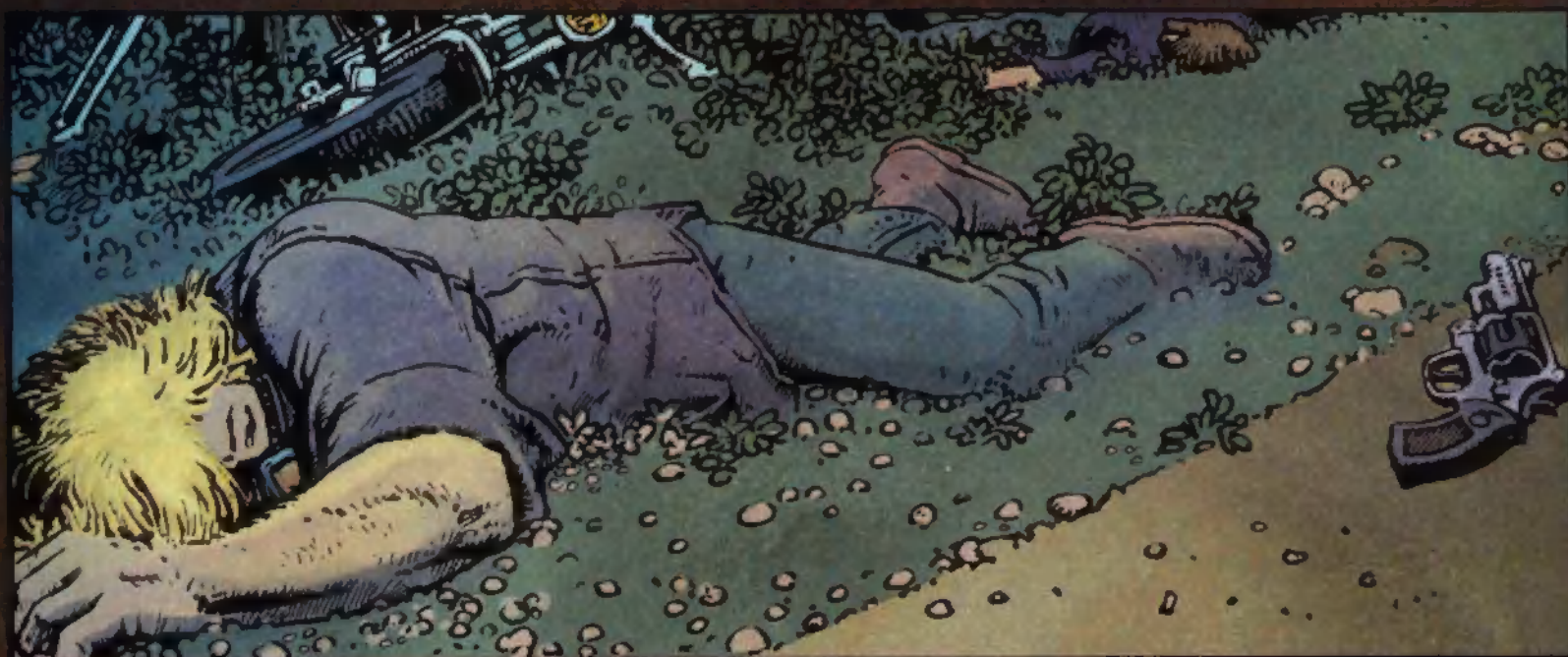
WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' ABOUT? YOU'RE MY FRIEND.



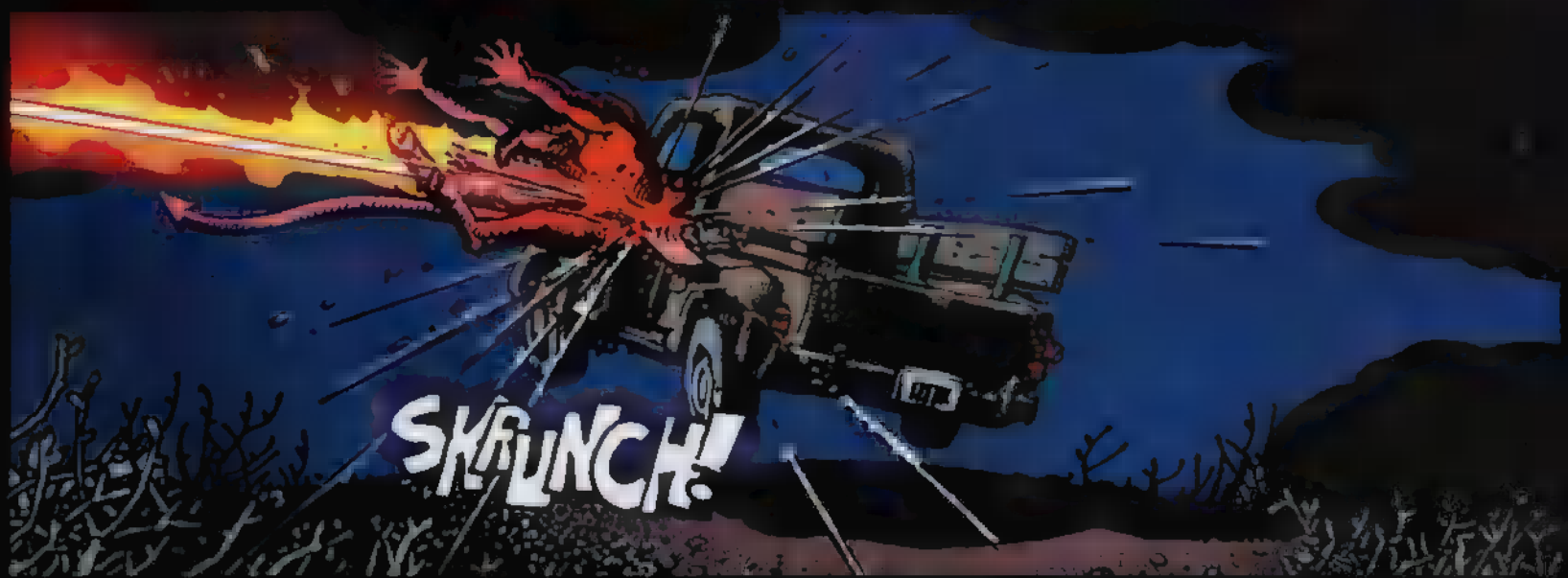
WHAT'S MINE IS YOURS.



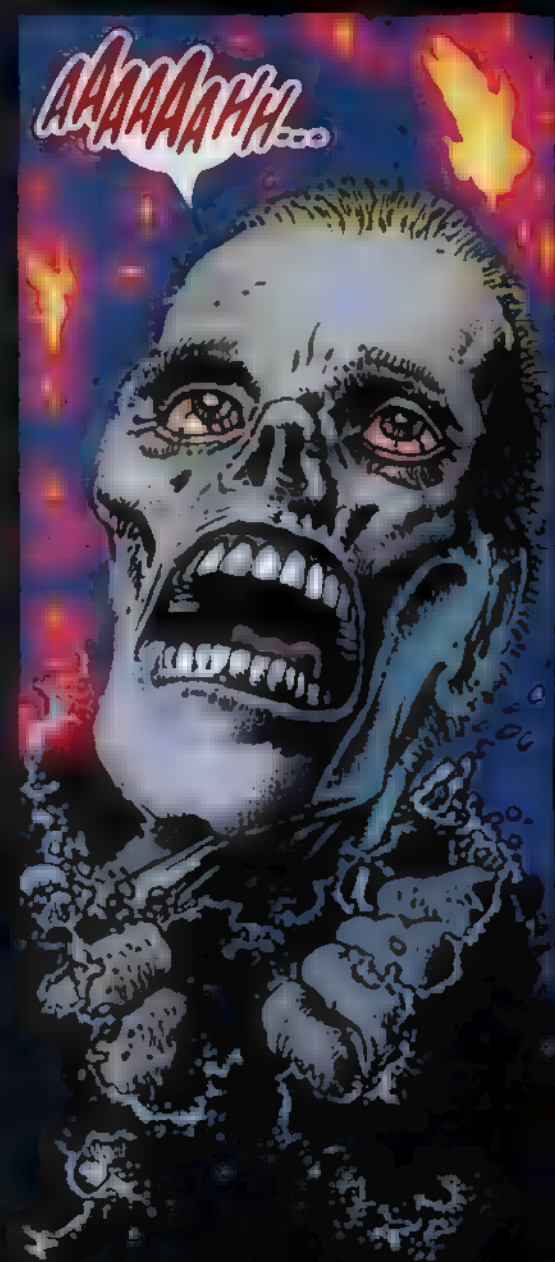












HHHH...

WHAT...
WHAT DID
I...?

WHATEVER HAS
TO BE DONE, I NEED
TO STEP BACK AN'
LET GHOST RIDER
HANDLE IT.

NEVER
MIND.

I DON'T
WANNA
KNOW.

'CAUSE
JOHNNY BLAZE
IS NO MATCH FOR
THE DEVIL--
NOT NOW...

...NOT
EVER.



DON'T ASK
ANY QUESTIONS,
JUST MOVE. QUICKLY.



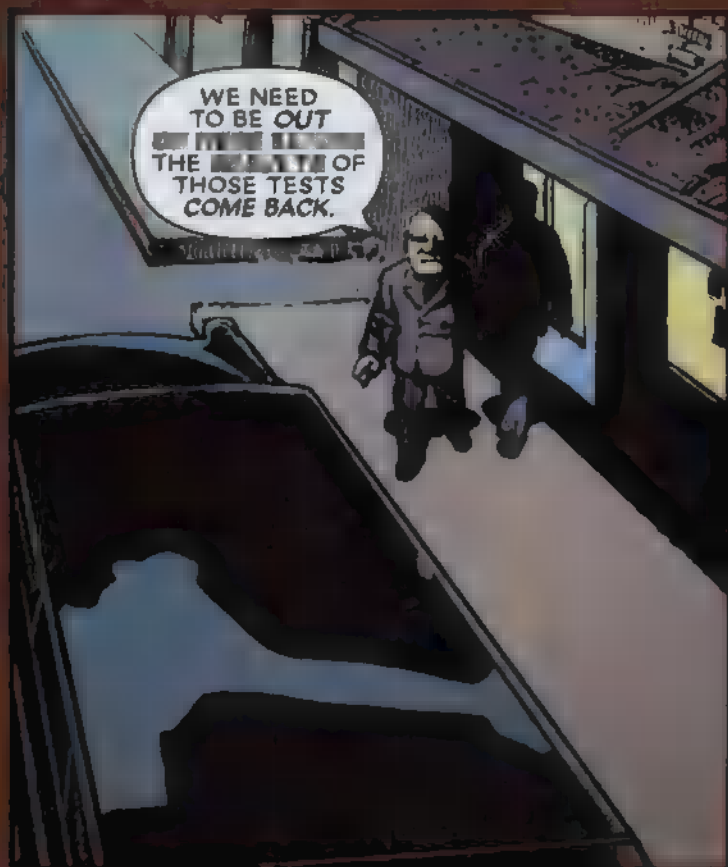
WHAT'S THE
HURRY?

YOU WERE
ARRESTED FOR
POSSESSION OF
AN UNLICENSED
FIREARM.

STANDARD
PROTOCOL
REQUIRES THAT
THE FIREARM
BE RESEARCHED
AND TESTED.



WE NEED
TO BE OUT
OF THE BUILDING
THE RESULTS OF
THOSE TESTS
COME BACK.



WAIT A
MINUTE.

WHY?



WE'LL
TALK ABOUT
IT IN THE
CAR.





DAMMIT!



THAT'S ALL YOU
COULD GET HIM
ON? "UNLICENSED
FIREARM"?

■■■ DIDN'T
TRY TO SWING
AT YOU?
THREATEN YOU ■
ANY WAY?



HE DIDN'T
EVEN TRY
T'DEFEND
HIMSELF.

AN' I GAVE
'IM EVERY
REASON T'DO
THAT.



NOPE, HE
WENT WITHOUT
SO MUCH ■■ A CROSS
WORD, SAME AS
LAST TIME.

I JUS'
DUNNO WHA
T'DO T'PUSH
THAT BOY'S
BUTTONS...



...WHAT'RE
YOU DOIN'?!



PRAYING.

BECAUSE AT
THIS POINT, ■■ CAN
ONLY HOPE THAT THEY
DON'T KNOW HOW TO
"PUSH THAT BOY'S
BUTTONS," EITHER.

HEY, BUDDY...
THANKS FOR COVERIN'
FOR ME. THAT
WAS REAL COOL
OF YOU.

SUCKS THAT
I LOST MY
PISTOL, BUT THAT'S
OKAY--I GOT
ANOTHER ONE.

WHAT'S
GOIN' ON,
BEDELSTRAUM?
WHAT'S THE BIG
DEAL ABOUT
THAT GUN?

THE "BIG
DEAL" IS THAT
IT WAS USED TO KILL
A BARTENDER
A FEW NIGHTS
AGO.

HEY,
DON'T LOOK
AT ME...

HE'S THE
ONE THAT
GAVE IT
TO ME...

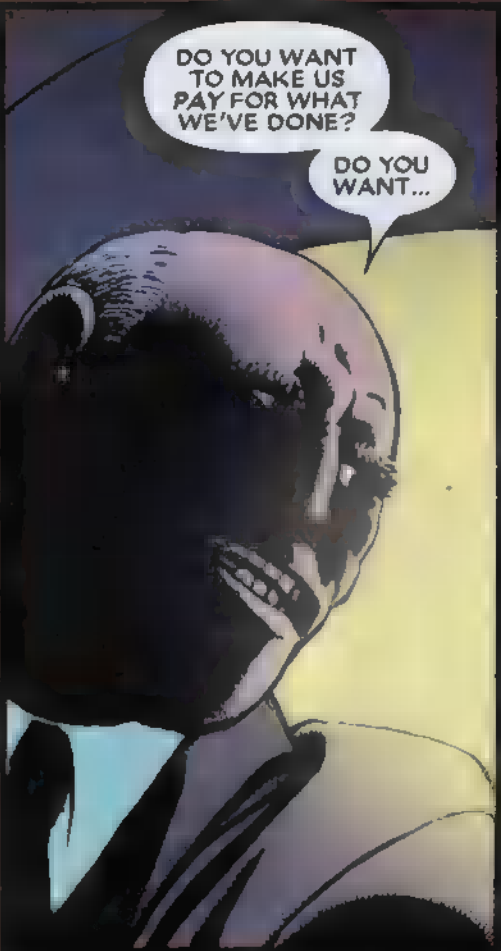
YES.

I GAVE
IT TO HIM...
TO GIVE TO
YOU.

WE SET
YOU UP,
JOHNNY.



SO...
...HOW'S THAT MAKE YOU FEEL, JOHNNY?



DO YOU WANT TO MAKE US PAY FOR WHAT WE'VE DONE?
DO YOU WANT...



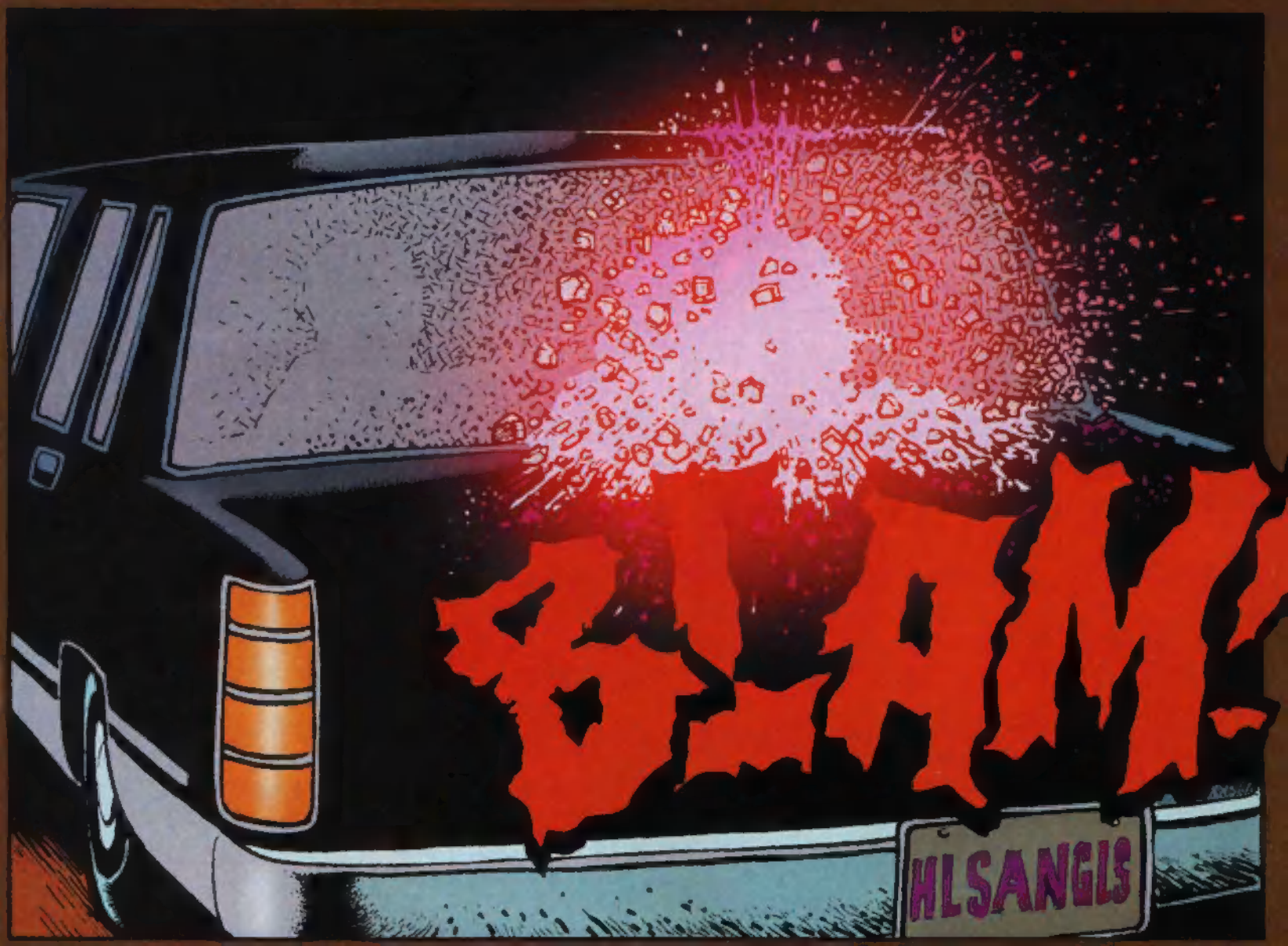
...VENGEANCE?
YES...



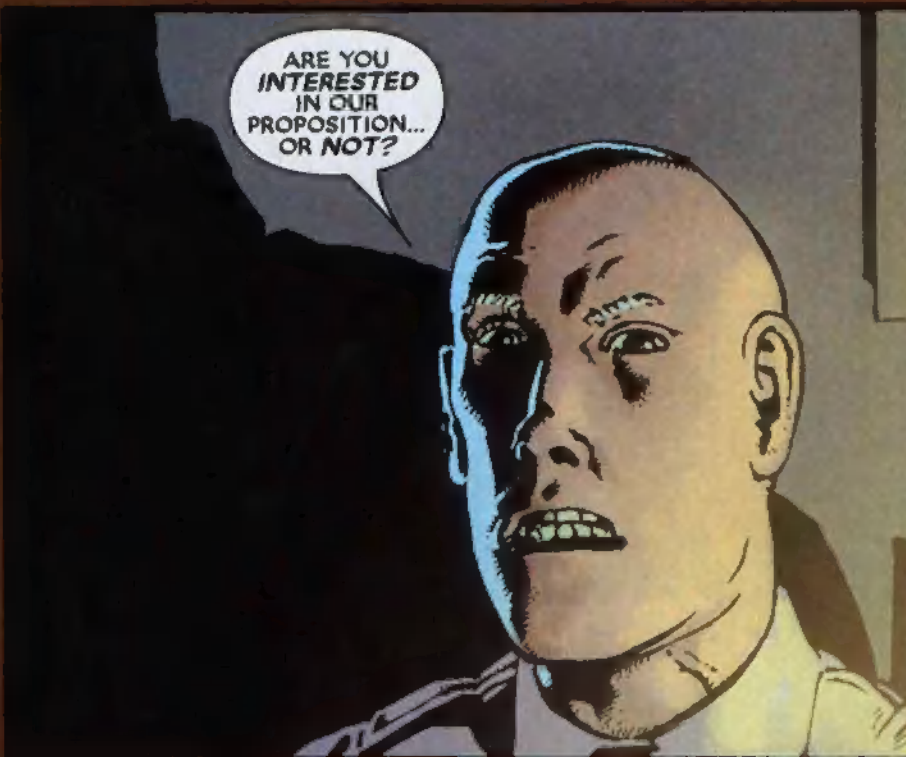
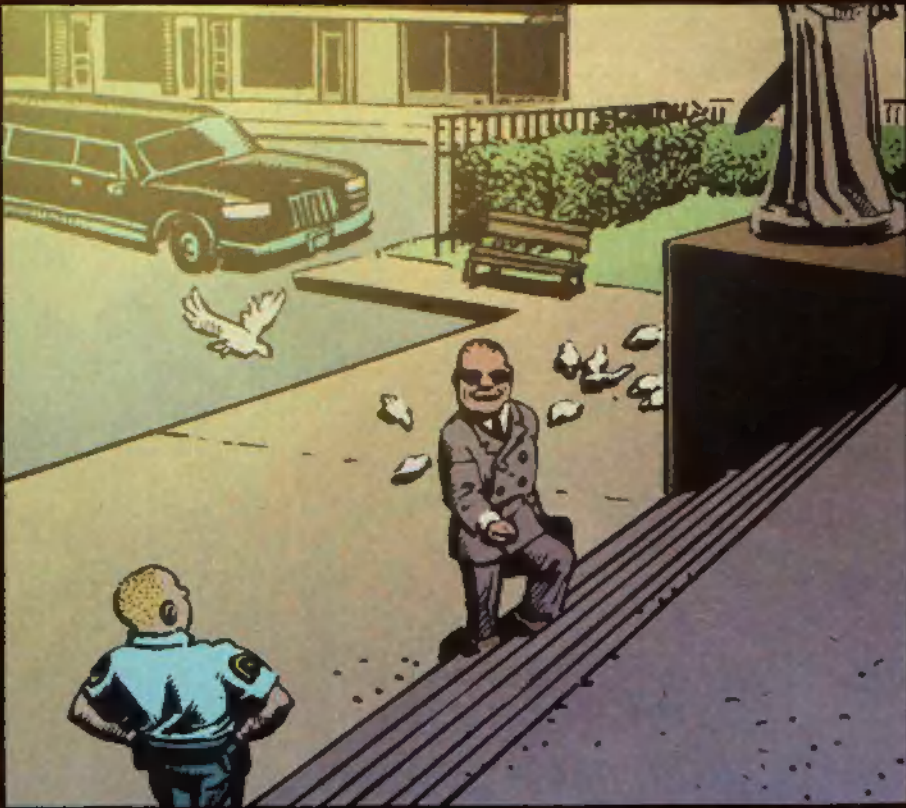
NO!



YES?
NO?
WHICH ONE IS IT?









GHOST WRITERS

Hello, Riders! And welcome back! Before we dig into the mailbag this month, I wanted to take a moment to thank Richard Corben for coming aboard for our two-part "Hell to Pay" and knocking it so completely out of the park. Coupled with Dan's awesome story and Jose Villarrubia's spectacular coloring, I think this short arc may go down as one of the classic GR stories.

Next month, your old friends, Jarv and Tex, return in a big way with part one of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow, Illinois," a slam-bang action adventure which ties into the Civil War landscape and pits Ghost Rider against another fan-favorite flamehead. Don't miss it!

Howdy Marvel,

My staff and customers have been on my case to send you this picture of my left calf for weeks. As you can see, it was based on my favorite Ghost Rider story: "The Salvation Run." Fortunately for me and all the other Ghost Rider fans out there, we now have a new favorite. Right on the heels of Garth Ennis' brilliant work, Mr. Way has (pardon the pun) taken us on a hell of a ride. Ghost Rider has always been a great concept and character; he finally has some great stories to match!! Yes, I am a retailer and a Marvel apologist and wouldn't have it any other way!

P.S. I attached photos of all of my Marvel tattoos; don't worry—the Spidey is on my back. And thanks for getting this book out on time!

Gary Buechler
The Comic Outpost
San Francisco, CA



Hey, Gary—
When you're a Marvel fan, what's there to apologize about? It's especially cool to hear from a retailer who's as enthusiastic about the Rider as some of our most devoted fans. And those tattoos are incredible! Thanks for sending them in. I was

beginning to think we'd run out of tattooed Ghost Rider fans... and that terrifying thought was keeping me awake at night in a cold sweat.

Flameheads,

My name is Andre. I have been collecting comics for a short while: 2 years as of April. I was only 12 at the time, and I only picked up a couple of books my father recommended (my father was a comic book collector for 15 years). Eventually, I came upon the "Road to Damnation" miniseries. The amount of awesomeness blew my mind. I had never seen more beautiful art in comics before. Clayton Crain did an incredible job. I really liked the writing also. I even lent all six issues to my best friend (I am really protective of my comics) and I really want to see the movie on opening night. And now that *Ghost Rider* is an ongoing series, I decided to search through my dad's 1000+ comic collection for old *Ghost Rider*.

I want to be a comic book writer someday (my mom isn't impressed, but my dad is!). I even went out and bought Scott McCloud's *Understanding Comics*. Reading this comic only compels me even more to one day write comic books, especially *Ghost Rider*!

Anyway, until that happens, I'll be here collecting!

Andre

Andre, we're very happy to hear that *Ghost Rider* has sparked a creative passion in you. It's no easy feat to become a comic book writer, but with enough practice, patience, and persistence, you may get your wish. And who knows? Maybe I'll be the obnoxious editor hassling you and filling up your answering machine with unreasonable requests for 22 pages of script, solicitation copy, and lettering corrections before the end of the day!

Dear Flameheads,

I know that there probably aren't many women who are Ghost Rider fans, but I've been reading and slowly building my collection ever since my brother gave me a GR comic (second series with Danny Ketch). I have the complete second series, *Midnight Sons*, and have just begun to get not only this new series, but also the very first series. I also have a few T-shirts, a couple of Ghost Rider posters, and at one point in time, the action figures. I keep all my issues in one long comic box and have even found a really rare behind-the-scenes story of the *Midnight Sons* told by Barbara Ketch, which I have typed up onto my computer for back-up. I can hardly wait to see the movie when it is released—the previews look way cool!

Anyway, I just wanted you to know that I love Ghost Rider and I hope you guys keep up the good work!

Elizabeth Vounce
Norwich, Connecticut

While we're grateful to have such a devoted fan, regardless of the gender, Elizabeth does raise a good point! How many of you female Ghost Rider fans are out there? Is the Lady Rider a rare breed or am I about to drown in an avalanche of fan fe-mail? Judging by our next letter, Elizabeth may not be alone!

Dear Ghost Rider staff,

As a long-time GR fan, I wanted to say how thrilled I am with this new run. This series brings new life (literally!) to Johnny and brought him new fans as well.

I've loved Johnny ever since I first saw him in an Avengers comic way back when. I had collected his original series, but lost those in a flood, so I'm glad there are Essentials.

Anyway, I look forward to Johnny's continued battle with Lucifer and hope to see more faces from Johnny's past.

Keep up the good work!

Tammy Suto
Rayland, OH

Tammy, that's heartbreaking—losing your Johnny Blaze originals in a flood? Damn! Make sure you keep these new GR issues dry! If there's one thing that ticks off the Ghost Rider, it's getting his flamehead waterlogged.

Oh, and many thanks for the Christmas card! Cute puppies and a flaming skeleton on a motorcycle go together like peanut butter and jelly!

Hey guys,

While the story ("The Day Johnny Came Home") was way swell, the real treat here was the letters page. What a bunch of devoted dreamers!

Paul Filippo

Paul, I couldn't agree more!

NEXT ISSUE:



THE HEADLESS RIDER!

ADAM ROSENBLIND
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